

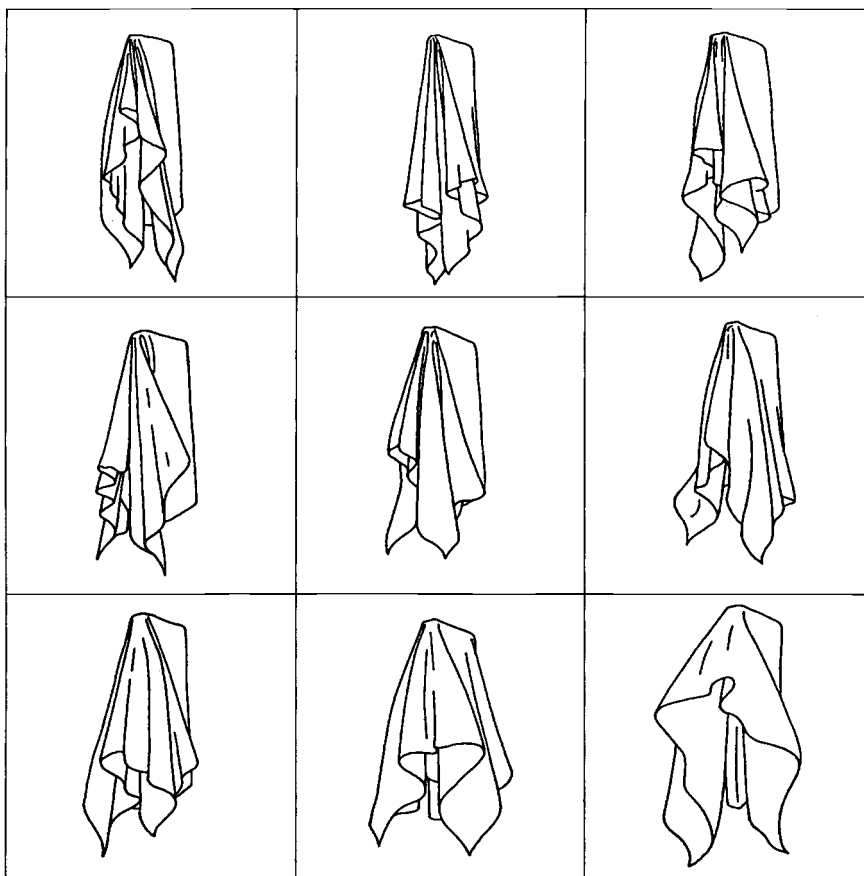
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Fashion Terms: Apparel Fabric Glossary



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Fashion Terms: Apparel Fabric Glossary

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The terms used to describe a fabric refer to its fiber, yarn, structure, and finish. Changes in these components affect the appearance, weight, care, and handling of the fabric.

There are too many variations to describe all fabrics on the market. Many fabrics are simply given style numbers by the manufacturer. However, familiarity with the variations in fabrics helps the consumer read catalogs and understand descriptions of fabrics.

Fibers used for apparel include natural fibers such as cotton, linen, ramie, silk, and wool. Manufactured fibers used in apparel include acetate, acrylic, nylon, olefin, polyester, rayon, and spandex. Fiber manufacturers may give their fibers brand names such as Dacron, Fortrel, Kodel, and Trevira, all brand names of polyester.

To make fabric, fibers are grouped to form yarns. Shorter fibers such as cotton are twisted or spun together. Manufactured fibers are formed in continuous filaments. The filaments may be grouped and used as yarns or they may be cut into short pieces called staple, then spun into yarns.

There are many methods of making textile fabrics. Most apparel fabrics are made by weaving or knitting. For more information on other fabric structures, see the Extension publication EC 897, *The Structure of Textile Fabrics* (see back page for ordering information.)

The spun yarns may be even or uneven (called slub) and may be loosely or tightly twisted. Small yarns may be twisted together smoothly in a plyed yarn or wrapped one around another, such as a core spun yarn. Other yarn variations include small yarns unevenly twisted together with loops, as in bouclé; novelty spots inserted, as in tweed; or various types of knots. Using colored yarns creates patterns like stripes or plaids. Fabrics such as bouclé, crepe, and tweed take their names from yarn variations.

Weave structures are formed by the interlacing of crosswise yarns (filling or weft) with lengthwise yarns (warp). Plain weaves pass filling yarns over and under alternating warp yarns. Variations include basket weave, in which single or double filling yarns pass over and under doubled or multiple warp yarns. Plain weave variations combining fine and thick yarns are called rib weaves. Twill weaves interlace filling yarns in a regular but uneven pattern

to create diagonal lines through the fabric. Variations in the number of yarns crossed over and under and the pattern of repeat change the angle and distinctiveness of the diagonal line. Numbers used to describe twill weaves (2 x 2, 2 x 1, etc.) indicate the yarns passed over and under. Satin weaves achieve their smoothness by the unbroken passage of a warp yarn over several filling yarns. Pile weaves contain additional yarns that form the surface texture of the fabric, such as the uncut loops in terry cloth or the cut loops in velvet.

Knit structures are interlooping yarns, also called stitches. Variations are based on the way the yarn is added to the fabric and the way the knit loops are formed. Adding yarn horizontally results in a weft knit. Warp knits have yarns supplied vertically to each of the many needles moving vertically and diagonally to form the knit loops. Heavier weight fabrics and more stable knit structures, called double knits, are created by interlooping the yarns between two sets of needles. Knit patterns may be formed by twisting loops, transferring loops to adjacent needles, or stretching a loop to another loop formed one or more rows later. Knitted patterns are named by their appearance: cable, mesh, popcorn, or textured. Many knit patterns are created by using colored yarns in designs.

Finishes used on fibers, yarns, or fabrics change the appearance or performance. Dyeing, printing, sueding, and glazing change the appearance; durable press, shrinkage control, rain resistance, and stain resistance change the performance.

As many new technological developments occur, some fabrics are known by their trade or brand names. Some brand names are for fibers, some for yarns, some for fabric structures, and some for finishes.

Everyone uses and wears fabrics every day. To select apparel fabrics, consumers need to understand differences and compare components, appearance, and potential durability and maintenance. Increased catalog shopping does not allow consumers to handle and see fabrics for themselves. The purpose of this publication is to help consumers distinguish among fabrics and understand fabric descriptions used in the market.

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Traditional Fabrics

Barathea

A medium-weight, broken rib or twill weave variation with a pebbly, uneven surface.

Basket weave

A variation of the plain weave in which two or more yarns are woven as one in either the warp or weft directions or both.

Batiste

A sheer, lightweight, smooth, plain weave fabric, usually of cotton or cotton blend.

Bedford cord

A medium- to heavyweight, firm, lengthwise ribbed fabric.

Bengaline

A medium-weight, lustrous crosswise ribbed fabric, heavier than faille and lighter than ottoman. Numerous fine warp yarns completely cover the heavy filling yarns.

Boiled wool

A heavy woven or knitted wool fabric shrunk under controlled temperature, moisture, and agitation to make a firm, thick fabric.

Bouclé

A looped yarn that gives a loopy, knotted surface to woven or knitted fabric.

Broadcloth

A lightweight, tight, plain weave fabric with a fine-filling rib. It is usually made of cotton or cotton/polyester blend. When wool fibers are used it may be napped or brushed and pressed flat.

Brocade

A medium- to heavyweight fabric, with an interwoven or jacquard design using multiple colors or weave patterns.

Butcher cloth

A medium-weight, plain weave fabric made from irregular coarse yarn.

Butcher linen

A medium-weight, plain weave fabric made of linen fiber, with coarse yarn.

Calico

A lightweight, plain weave, cotton-type fabric with a small print design.

Cambric

A lightweight, closely woven, plain weave fabric. It is slightly lustrous on one side.

Canvas

A medium- to heavyweight, firm, plain weave fabric. Canvas and duck are interchangeable although canvas is the term used for heavier weights.

Cavalry twill

A medium- to heavyweight twill weave fabric with double prominent diagonal twill line.

Challis

A lightweight, plain weave fabric with a soft finish.

Chambray

A light- to medium-weight plain weave fabric with colored warp yarns and white filling yarns.

Charmeuse

A lightweight fabric, with hard twist warp yarns and crepe filling yarns in a satin weave. It has a semi-lustrous face and dull back.

Chevoit

A medium-heavy, plain or twill weave fabric of uneven yarns. It is brushed or pulled for a hairy, rough surface.

Chiffon

A very lightweight, sheer, plain weave fabric of fine, tightly twisted yarns.

China silk

A lightweight, soft, plain weave fabric of fine filament yarns.

Chino

A heavyweight, slightly lustrous, steep twill fabric, often vat-dyed in khaki color.

Chintz

A medium- to heavyweight, plain weave fabric with a lustrous glazed finish.

Cloque

A heavyweight fabric with an irregular blistered look. May be dobby, jacquard, or double weave.

Corduroy

A medium-weight, lengthwise ribbed, cut-pile fabric.

Covert

A medium- to heavyweight, closely woven, warp-face twill weave fabric with two-ply, two-color yarns for a mottled appearance.

Crash

A medium- to heavyweight, plain weave fabric with irregular yarns.

Crepe

Any fabric with a crinkled or pebbly surface from highly twisted yarns. The effect may be achieved by special weaves or by a finish.

Crepe de chine

A lightweight, plain weave fabric with medium luster. It is made from high twist filament yarn.

Damask

A medium- to heavyweight, reversible, jacquard-woven fabric. The pattern and the background have contrasting luster.

Denim

A medium- to heavyweight, left-to-right twill weave fabric. Usually the warp is colored and the filling is white.

Dimity

A lightweight, plain weave fabric with regularly doubled or heavier warp yarns.

Dobby

A fabric with small geometric woven designs made on a dobby loom or a multiple harness loom with a dobby attachment to control the warp yarns.

Dotted Swiss

A lightweight, sheer, plain weave fabric with small dots at regular intervals. (The dots may be flocked, woven in and clipped, or printed onto the fabric.)

Double cloth

A fabric made by weaving two fabrics simultaneously with five sets of yarns, one set connecting the two fabrics.

Double knit

A weft knit fabric made with two sets of needles. It is heavier, thicker, and more stable than jersey.

Double weave

A heavy fabric woven with two complete sets of warp and filling yarns that periodically reverse positions, often creating a reversible fabric.

Drill

A medium- to heavyweight, warp-faced, right-to-left twill weave fabric. A strong fabric similar to denim, but characterized by the diagonal twill running from lower right to upper left.

Duck

A medium- to heavyweight, closely woven, plain weave fabric.

Duvelyn

A medium-weight satin or twill weave fabric with a velvet-like surface made by napping, shearing, and brushing. (The heavier weight is called *suedecloth*.)

Eyelet

A light- to medium-weight, plain weave fabric with an embroidered design. The embroidery usually includes small cut-out areas with stitching around the cut-outs.

Faille

A light- to medium-weight plain weave fabric with lustrous flattened crosswise ribs.

Felt

A non-woven fiberweb. Wool felt is made by applying heat, moisture, and agitation to interlock the scales of the fiber. Felt-like fabrics of other fibers are usually called non-wovens.

Flannel

A light- to heavyweight plain or twill weave fabric with a slightly napped surface.

Flannelette

A soft plain or twill weave cotton fabric that is slightly napped on one side.

Fleece

A heavy, thick pile fabric. It is sometimes knitted and napped.

Foulard

A lightweight, filament yarn, twill weave fabric with a soft finish, lustrous face and dull reverse side.

Gabardine

A medium- to heavyweight twill weave fabric with fine, close, diagonal lines visible only on the face side. The diagonal lines can be regular or steep and are more pronounced than in serge.

Gauze

A lightweight, sheer, plain weave fabric with widely spaced yarns.

Georgette

A lightweight, sheer, plain weave fabric made with fine, high twist crepe yarns.

Gingham

A light- to medium-weight, yarn-dyed, plain weave fabric in checks, or plaids.

Grosgrain

A heavyweight, closely woven, warp-faced fabric with round filling ribs. The ribs are heavier than poplin, rounder than faille. It is frequently seen in ribbon, but can be full-width fabric.

Habutai

A lightweight, soft, plain weave, silk fabric. (It is heavier than China silk.)

Handkerchief linen

A lightweight, very fine, lustrous, plain weave fabric made from slubbed linen yarn.

Herringbone

A broken twill-weave pattern made by changing the direction of the twill diagonally in a zigzag effect. The pattern may be used with a variety of fibers and weights of fabric.

Homespun

A heavyweight, loosely woven, plain weave fabric made from coarse yarn. Originally it was wool that was spun and woven at home.

Honan

A lightweight, filament warp and slub filling yarn, plain weave fabric. It was originally silk.

Hopsacking

A heavyweight, loose, plain weave fabric made from coarse yarn. It is often a basket or novelty weave.

Interlock

A reversible, firm doubleknit of 1 x 1 rib so both sides look like the face side of jersey.

Jacquard

A complex fabric with a woven-in pattern made by controlling individual warp yarns.

Jean

A medium-weight, right-to-left, warp-faced twill weave fabric. It is softer and lighter than drill. The term is sometimes interchanged with denim, although the fabrics are different, especially in the twill direction.

Jersey

A lightweight, one-sided, plain weft knit. The face side has a more vertical appearance and the back side more horizontal.

Knitted fabrics

Fabrics made by interlooping yarns called stitches. Knit fabrics may be warp or weft (filling) knitted.

Lace

A light- to medium-weight, open-work fabric with a design made by twisting or knotting threads together.

Lamé

A fabric made of metallic yarns.

Lawn

A lightweight, sheer, plain weave fabric with a soft or crisp finish.

Madras

A lightweight, soft, usually plain weave fabric in a striped or plaid pattern. True madras is woven in India from cotton yarns, dyed with vegetable dyes that bleed and fade during laundering.

Matelassé

A medium- to heavyweight, double-cloth fabric woven with a quilted or blistered surface.

Melton

A thick, heavyweight, plain or twill weave coating fabric with napped and smoothed lustrous surface.

Moleskin

A strong, heavyweight, satin weave fabric with a sueded surface.

Muslin

A firm, light-, medium-, or heavyweight plain weave cotton fabric. Available in a variety of qualities.

Nainsook

A lightweight, plain weave fabric with a soft finish. It is slightly heavier than lawn.

Ninon

A lightweight, sheer, slightly crisp, open plain weave fabric.

Non-wovens

Fabric-like assemblies of fibers. They are made by mechanically interlocking the fibers with barbed needles, by fusing heat-sensitive fibers, or by using an adhesive.

Organdy

A lightweight, sheer, crisp to stiff, plain weave fabric made from spun yarn.

Organza

A lightweight, sheer, crisp, plain weave fabric made from filament yarn.

Ottoman

A heavyweight, firm, plain weave fabric with large uneven ribs.

Oxford cloth

A light- to medium-weight, soft, basket weave fabric.

Panné

A medium- to heavyweight, lustrous, flattened pile fabric. The pile is longer than velvet but shorter than plush.

Peau de soie

A heavy, soft, semi-dull, satin weave fabric.

Pebble crepe (also called moss crepe)

A light- to medium-weight, plain weave fabric with an uneven surface created by combining or plying yarns with different amounts of twist.

Percalé

A lightweight, fine yarn, plain weave fabric.

Piqué

A light-, medium-weight, or heavyweight fabric, with two sets of heavier and two sets of finer yarns in a pattern. It may be a dobby or jacquard weave. There are a variety of piqué patterns.

Plissé

A lightweight, plain weave, chemically crinkled finished fabric.

Pointelle

A rib-knit fabric that uses transfer stitches to create an openwork design.

Polished cotton

A medium-weight, plain weave fabric with a glazed finish.

Pongee

A light- to medium-weight, plain weave fabric with a fine regular warp and irregular filling yarns.

Ponte di Roma

A medium-weight, double knit with a slight horizontal emphasis.

Poplin

A medium- to heavyweight, tightly woven, filling ribbed, plain weave fabric.

Quilted

Fabrics with multiple layers stitched or bonded together.

Raschel knits

Warp knit fabrics with intricate openwork patterns.

Rep

A medium-weight, plain weave fabric with distinct horizontal ribs. The ribs are less distinct than bengaline and more distinct than poplin.

Rib knit

A light- to medium-weight, elastic, weft knit fabric with alternating knit and purl stitches forming lengthwise ribs.

Sailcloth

A plain weave fabric made with two warp yarns and one filling yarn. There are many weights and qualities available.

Sateen

A medium- to heavyweight, strong, semi-lustrous, spun-yarn, satin weave fabric with floats (long surface yarns) running in the filling direction.

Satin

A medium- to heavyweight, lustrous, filament-yarn, satin-weave fabric with floats running in the warp direction.

Seersucker

A light- to medium-weight, slack-tension weave fabric made with two sets of warp yarns. One puckers while the other remains flat.

Serge

A heavyweight, smooth 2 x 2 twill weave fabric made from high twist yarn.

Shaker knit

A weft knit in a 1 x 1 rib stitch of heavy yarn.

Shantung

A medium-weight, rough-textured, plain weave fabric of fine, even warp yarns and uneven slub filling yarns.

Sharkskin

A medium-weight, semi-crisp, left to right, twill weave fabric.

Silk noil

Short ends of silk fibers spun into a rough, textured yarn used in a plain weave fabric.

Suede cloth

A medium-weight woven, knitted, or non-woven fabric napped and sheared to resemble suede leather.

Surah

A lightweight, soft, filament yarn, twill weave fabric.

Sweater knit

A heavyweight weft knit resembling hand knitting.

Taffeta

A light- to medium-weight, fine-rib, crisp, lustrous, filament yarn, plain weave fabric. A variation with more pronounced crosswise ribs is called *faill* *taffeta*.

Tapestry

A heavy, ribbed fabric of spun yarns with colored jacquard design resulting from different colored groups of filling yarns (visible on the back).

Terry cloth

A medium- to heavyweight, warp-yarn pile weave with loops on one or both sides.

Ticking

A heavy, colored and white striped warp, twill-weave fabric.

Tricot

A lightweight, stable, warp knit, usually of filament yarns.

Tulle

A sheer, fine, crisp, warp knit with a hexagonal-shaped open mesh texture.

Tweed

A rough-textured, plain weave fabric made from mixed color yarns. Tweed describes a wide range of light to heavyweight, light- to rough-textured, plain or twill weave fabrics of wool or wool blends characterized by their mixed color effect yarns.

Velour

A general term to describe cut pile fabrics. Velours can be woven or knitted.

Velvet

A medium- to heavyweight, short, soft, thick, filament yarn, warp-pile fabric.

Velveteen

A medium- to heavyweight, short, soft, thick, spun yarn, filling-pile fabric.

Voile

A lightweight, sheer, plain weave fabric of tightly twisted yarns to give a crisp hand. (It has fewer yarns and is more open than lawn.)

Waffle cloth

A dobby-weave fabric with a three-dimensional honeycomb pattern.

Whipcord

A heavyweight, twill weave fabric with a pronounced diagonal rib.

Weft knits

Fabrics with one or more yarns running crosswise in the fabric.

Worsted wool

Fabric made from medium-weight, combed (long fibers) wool yarn in a tight plain or twill weave fabric. Tropical worsted is a lighter weight. (Woolens are shorter fibers spun without combing.)

For further reading

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